United Nations A/71/PV.32

General Assembly

Official Records

Seventy-first session

32nd plenary meeting
Wednesday, 26 October 2016, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Thomson ..... (Fiji)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 39

Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba

Report of the Secretary-General (A/71/91)

Draft resolution (A/71/L.3)

Mr. Wafy (Niger): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of African States on a matter of great importance to the Group, and Africa in general, namely, the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba.

For more than two decades, this matter has been brought before the General Assembly against the background of overwhelming yet unheeded appeals for the immediate end to the long-standing economic embargo against Cuba. Today those appeals have taken on a new dimension and more compelling justification, given the positive developments and progress made in relations between the Governments of Cuba and the United States of America. The new dimension has been occasioned by the re-establishment of diplomatic relations, the historic visit by President Barack Obama to Cuba in March — apparently the first visit by an American President to that country since 1928 — and the resumption of commercial airline service between the two countries in August.

The African Group calls for those ground-breaking positive steps to go further in lifting the economic embargo, which continues to inflict economic hardship on the poor and innocent population of Cuba, and most certainly makes the achievement of sustainable development even more elusive, thereby undermining our collective efforts towards a universal push to drive the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Accordingly, the Group of African States reaffirms its full support for the General Assembly resolution on the necessity of ending the economic, financial and commercial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba. The Group of African States further reiterates the call made by the African Union Assembly of Heads of State and Government and the overwhelming call from States Members of the United Nations, for the lifting of the long-standing and unjust economic, commercial and financial blockade on Cuba.

Mr. Plasai (Thailand): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on agenda item 39, entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba".

I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (A/71/91) on the item we are discussing today.

The Group of 77 and China would like, first of all, to sincerely welcome the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between the Government of Cuba and the Government of the United States of America.

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The Group also welcomes steps taken towards the elimination of the United States embargo against Cuba, which include, among others, the reopening of their respective embassies in 2015, President Obama's visit to Cuba in March and the amendments made in 2015 and 2016 by the United States Department of the Treasury and the United States Department of Commerce.

While those are positive steps, they remain inadequate to effectively end the impact of the embargo. Much more remains to be done, especially action by the United States Congress with regard to legislative bills proposing the lifting of blockade sanctions. The Group also believes that the future President of the United States can and should exercise more of his or her executive powers to further modify blockade regulations in the light of the continued disinclination on the part of the United States Congress to end those punitive measures, which are essentially in violation of the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

The Group of 77 and China would like to reiterate our commitment to the principles, purposes and spirit of the Charter of the United Nations, in particular the principles of the sovereign equality of States, non-intervention and non-interference in their internal affairs, as well as the freedom of international trade and navigation. The Group believes that it is the duty and responsibility of every Member State to comply strictly with those principles. The Group is of the view that any policy or action that disregards those principles — in this case the unilateral economic sanctions against Cuba — should be seriously considered for immediate repeal. Given that the United States embargo against Cuba has continued for more than 50 years, the Group of 77 and China would like to express its deep concern about the prolonged negative effects that the economic sanctions and travel restrictions have had on Cuba and its people.

From April 2015 to April 2016, the impact of the United States embargo on Cuba's foreign trade amounted to more than $4 billion. Limited foreign investment and difficult access to development assistance have translated directly into economic hardship and humanitarian impacts for the people of Cuba. The country's socioeconomic reforms have also been hampered by the embargo. The Group of 77 and China are concerned that, if those economic sanctions continue, Cuba's development potential, in both economic and human-development terms, will be unfairly undermined, and it will be impossible for Cuba to successfully embark upon the path towards sustainable development envisaged in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, for which all Member States have pledged support.

Over many decades, Cuba has extensively and continuously contributed to the international community, particularly through its remarkable provision of medical assistance to countries in need. Cuba's emergency assistance to the African countries affected by the Ebola crisis in West Africa is a great example of its solidarity with the international community. The Group of 77 and China hereby commend Cuba's contributions in the form of humanitarian assistance and would like to express our hope that, if the United States embargo were permanently lifted, Cuba would be granted the opportunity that it has long deserved to fully cooperate with the global community and international organizations on health, the environment and agriculture, among other important issues.

The Group of 77 and China would like to reiterate our strong support for the implementation of the recommendations of resolution 70/5 and our call for an end to the economic, commercial and financial embargo by the United States against Cuba. The urgency and necessity of our call is further highlighted by the ongoing global and collective striving to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Group of 77 and China would therefore like to appeal to the international community to further step up efforts in support of the lifting of the embargo, not solely for the benefit of Cuba, but also for the full achievement of the economic and social development of all members of the global community as a whole.

Mr. Rattray (Jamaica): It a great privilege for me to address the General Assembly on behalf of the 14 member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

CARICOM aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of the Kingdom of Thailand on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and with the statement to be delivered by the representative of the Dominican Republic on behalf of Community of Latin American and Caribbean States.

For far too many years, the United States has maintained a commercial embargo on Cuba, through various laws, regulations and presidential proclamations. That pernicious embargo has restricted

the ability of a proud, honourable, independent, talented and self-reliant people to conduct legitimate trade, travel and to undertake financial transactions. The stated purpose of that all-encompassing economic, commercial and financial blockade was to bring about political change. However, all these years later, we see that the intended outcome has failed to materialize, and the sole result is the undue hardship that has been caused to the population of Cuba. We fully agree with President Obama's characterization of the embargo as an outdated burden on the Cuban people, and we appreciate his acknowledgment that what the United States was doing was not working. Regrettably, however, his call upon his own Congress to lift the embargo has fallen on deaf ears.

CARICOM, and virtually the entire international community, has consistently highlighted the fact that that unilateral, coercive and anachronistic measure is inconsistent with international law, transgresses fundamental humanitarian principles and contravenes the Charter of the United Nations and the norms governing peaceful relations between States. In 2015, during its landmark seventieth session, the General Assembly voted for the twenty-fourth consecutive year on the necessity of ending the embargo against Cuba. The near unanimous vote of 191 countries in favour of resolution 70/5 reflected an overwhelming attestation of the international community's solidarity with the people of Cuba.

It is for that reason that CARICOM welcomes the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between the United States and Cuba, which was symbolized by President Obama's historic visit to Havana in March and by the tangible action taken to reopen embassies in their respective countries. We applaud President Obama's recognition that the age-old blockade has been harmful to the Cuban people, and we salute his stated desire to bury the last remnant of the Cold War in the Americas.

CARICOM and Cuba have had a long and fruitful relationship, which predates the embargo. Cuba is an important development partner for the Caribbean, and our bonds of mutual respect, friendship and cooperation are deeply valued and treasured. We also enjoy friendly relations with the United States and cooperate through various bilateral and regional initiatives. For that reason, we believe that improved relations between Cuba and the United States of America can only bode well for our nations. We therefore encourage both countries to continue to explore ways to increase the type of cooperation that was evident during the Ebola crisis in West Africa. The renewal of relations between those two neighbours signals a new era of engagement for both countries. CARICOM sees those developments as important first steps in our hemisphere's journey towards a destination that is enveloped in an environment of lasting peace and security, one where development can flourish.

CARICOM will once again unreservedly support the draft resolution on the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba. It is our hope that this will be the final time that the Assembly will have to consider this agenda item. Indeed, we look forward to that becoming a reality in the very near future.

Mr. Gafoor (Singapore): I have the honour to address the General Assembly on behalf of the 10 member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to express our support for draft resolution A/71/L.3, on ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against the Republic of Cuba.

The General Assembly has consistently adopted this annual draft resolution by an overwhelming majority since it was first introduced, in 1992. ASEAN member States have voted unanimously in favour of the draft resolution for the past 15 years. In 2015, a spokesperson for ASEAN made a statement in the General Assembly calling for the unilateral embargo against Cuba to be lifted as soon as possible (see A/70/PV.40). It is our firm belief that differences between States should be settled through engagement, not confrontation, and by inclusion, not isolation. All of that must be done while bearing in mind the fundamental principles of sovereign equality, non-interference and non-intervention, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

ASEAN welcomes the restoration of diplomatic relations between Cuba and the United States of America. President Barack Obama's state visit in March, the relaxation of travel restrictions to Cuba for United States citizens and the restoration of direct flights between the United States and Cuba are important steps towards the normalization of bilateral relations. They are key to building better regional relations in the Americas. In ASEAN's view, a more important step will be for the United States to end its economic,

commercial and financial embargo on Cuba. It would significantly improve the quality of life and living standards of the Cuban people and contribute to the economic and social development of Cuba. Bringing an end to the embargo would also advance the Assembly's efforts towards achieving an inclusive 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

ASEAN encourages the United States and Cuba in their efforts to chart a new way forward. We recognize that much remains to be done. ASEAN joins the other members of the Assembly in reiterating our support for the lifting of the unilateral embargo against Cuba as soon as possible.

Mr. Kononuchenko (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to thank the Secretary-General for having drafted the report (A/71/91) on the need to end the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba that was imposed by the United States of America. The position of the Russian Federation in that respect remains unchanged.

The embargo of the United States of America targeting Cuba must be immediately lifted, as it directly contradicts the fundamental principles of the Charter of the United Nations regarding the inadmissability of any measures of discrimination and intervention in the domestic affairs of sovereign States. The experience of Cuba does a good job of showing the short-sightedness and counterproductivity of the imposition of unilateral economic, commercial and financial coercive measures for the attainment of political objectives. Above all, they burden ordinary citizens. They worsen the plight of those most vulnerable. The outcome of the vote on draft resolution A/71/L.3, on the necessity of ending the economic, commerical and financial blockade, will again reveal the growing international awareness of the inadmissability of allowing such a state of affairs to persist.

The persistent American sanctions against Cuba are a relic of the past. From the outset, they placed Cuba in a vulnerable position regarding the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The sanctions constrain and at times directly undermine the capacity of that island State to mobilize resources for the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals. In that connection, the international community, having unanimously assumed the obligation to leave no one behind, does not have the moral right to continue to tolerate sanctions against Cuba.

On 19 October the State Duma of the Russian Federation made its annual declaration to the General Assembly and the Parliaments of Member States condemning the policy of Washington, which for more than 50 years has been opportunistically imposing the most protracted unilateral sanctions in the history of international relations. The Russian deputies extended their solidarity to the Cuban people, who are upholding their freedom and sovereignty despite limitations and restrictions of a humanitarian nature imposed on them.

The United States' relaxation of the embargo does not lift the embargo, as such. The failure to lift the embargo is, however, at odds with the approach of seeking to normalize Cuban-American relations. Cubans continue to face serious obstacles as they strive to fully engage in the international financial and economic system. That undermines the entire range of global integration links and undermines regional and international cooperation. We hope that Washington, D.C., will finally acknowledge the imperatives of the present-day realities and that the process of strengthening links with Havana — especially with regard to the embargo — will be furthered and receive the necessary momentum, regardless of the political situation and the results of the elections in the United States.

The Russian Federation would like to affirm its determination to cooperate in ensuring a fair and equitable international order founded on the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. We firmly believe that the key to solving the problem lies in the countries' goodwill and readiness to seek mutually acceptable compromises, rather than in using coercion and blackmail. The principles of integrity, sovereignty, non-interference in States' internal affairs, and cooperation do not permit the use of unilateral coercive measures, which are in violation of international law. In that connection, we deplore the continuing United States sanctions on Cuba and urge all countries to join us at this seventy-first session of the General Assembly in voting in favour of draft resolution A/71/L.3, on the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States against Cuba.

The President: I would like to propose that the list of speakers on the current topic be closed, in view of the large number of delegations inscribed on the list.

Unless I see any objection, I will take it that the Assembly agrees to close the list of speakers.

It was so decided.

Mr. Cortorreal (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC).

CELAC welcomes the progress in the process of normalizing diplomatic relations between Cuba and the United States of America, which marks the beginning of a new chapter in the history of peace and coexistence among the nations of the Americas. We acknowledge President Obama's wish to end the economic, commercial and financial embargo that the United States has imposed on Cuba for more than 50 years. However, we regret the fact that the blockade is still a reality for the Cuban people. It presents an undeniably major obstacle to Cuba's normal development. The Secretary-General's report (A/71/91) confirms how much the policy has cost Cuba and the substantial and unjustifiable harm that it does to the Cuban people's well-being. It is antithetical to the Latin American peoples' desire for peace, as enshrined in the 2014 Havana Declaration of the Latin American and the Caribbean region as a zone of peace. Moreover, the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed on Cuba is contrary to the letter and spirit and the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and of international law.

CELAC reiterates its firm rejection of any application of laws and measures, such as the Helms-Burton Act, that run counter to international law, especially those with extraterritorial effects, as well as the increasing harassment of Cuba in its international financial transactions, in opposition to the political will of the international community in general. We urge the Government of the United States of America to stop implementing its current policy on the matter. The United States Congress has the authority to end the Cuban embargo completely. However, we acknowledge the executive actions that President Obama has undertaken since January of last year, including removing Cuba from the list of countries sponsoring terrorism — which Cuba should never have been on in the first place — which illustrate the broad capacity that the United States President has to modify its unjust policy of embargo.

CELAC would like to recall its special declaration on the need to put an end the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States against Cuba, adopted at its fourth Summit, held in Quito on 26 and 27 January, in which we requested

> "the Government of the United States of America to fulfil the successive resolutions adopted by the United Nations General Assembly and, in response to the repeated calls from the international community, to put an end to the economic, commercial and financial blockade against Cuba, which runs contrary to international law and severely and unjustifiably damages the well-being of the Cuban people."

The United Nations Charter enshrines rights, obligations and principles that have become part of the legal heritage, not just of international law but of humankind in general. They should not be violated or abused by any Member State, which should ensure that their national and international actions are in accord with the rights, obligations and principles enshrined in the Charter.

In 2015 the resolution on this topic (resolution 70/5) was adopted with 191 votes in favour, in affirmation of the universality of its cause. For those reasons, CELAC will once again give its firm support to this year's draft resolution entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba" (A/71/L.3). We emphasize the inconsistency of unilateral measures that are not supported by international law or by the letter, the spirit and the purposes and principles of the Charter. We reiterate our call to the United States of America to accede to the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean and of every region of the world, and to harken to the views of its own people, as they urge it to put an end once and for all to the unjust embargo of Cuba.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait): I have the honour to make this statement on behalf of the member States of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

At the outset, the member States of the OIC welcome the restoration of diplomatic ties between the United States and Cuba, the reopening of their embassies more than a year ago and President Barack Obama's visit to Cuba in March, as well as the other significant steps that have been taken between the two countries' Governments. The OIC emphasizes the importance that

those steps will have for efforts to normalize bilateral ties between both nations, and stresses that improving relations and moving forward positively would be mutually beneficial for both peoples.

In spite of those positive steps, however, there remains the issue of the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States on Cuba years ago. That unilateral action by the United States has harmed not only the Cuban economy but also the well-being of the Cuban people and of Cuban nationals living in other countries, creating unnecessary economic hardship for them. Furthermore, the decades-long embargo has impeded socioeconomic and development progress, and it will obstruct Cuba's efforts to achieve sustainable development as long as it continues. In addition, the unilateral blockade also affects third countries, as well as entities and companies that face fines for conducting commercial activity with Cuba.

The OIC believes that such unilateral action runs counter to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. The OIC reiterates its deep concern about the negative impact that the unilateral blockade has on the Cuban people and considers its continuation unjustifiable.

The OIC supports this year's draft resolution on this agenda item (A/71/L.3) and calls on the States Members of the United Nations to vote in favour of it.The OIC believes that, given the support behind the draft resolution, entitled the "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba", it truly reflects the international community's collective view on this topic.

Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): As the current Chair of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, I have the honour to address the General Assembly on behalf of the 120 States Members of the United Nations that comprise this mechanism for consultation and joint political action.

I begin by extending a warm welcome and revolutionary salute to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, Mr. Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla.

Twnety-five times the General Assembly has expressed its overwhelming support for and solidarity with the Government and the people of Cuba with decisive votes in favour of the draft resolution calling on the United States to lift the embargo against this fraternal Latin American and Carribean country.. We thank the Secretary-General for the presentation of his report (A/71/91) on this important issue. Last year, 191 Member States voted in favour of resolution 70/5.

The Movement of Non-Aligned Countries has always reiterated its strongest opposition to unilateral coercive measures with extraterritorial effects because they are illegal. The Non-Aligned Movement has repeatedly called on the Government of the United States of America to put an end to its economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba, which is contrary to international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the norms and principles governing peaceful relations among States. It also violates Cuba's right to interact freely with the international community.

The embargo has had adverse impacts on the well-being of the people of Cuba in violating their human rights. The direct and indirect damage inflicted by the unjustified embargo against Cuba is enormous. That illegal policy affects all sectors that are crucial to the Cuban economy, such as public health, nutrition and agriculture, as well as banking, trade, investment and tourism. The blockade denies Cuba access to markets and to development aid from international financial institutions, as well as technology transfers. It creates impediments to the socioeconomic development of the country. The embargo is also the main obstacle to broader access to the Internet, the exchange of ideas and the development of cultural, sport and scientific relations. The continuation of the embargo is totally unjustifiable and undermines Cuba's efforts to achieve sustainable development.

The economic damage to the Cuban people by the imposition of the economic, commercial and financial embargo by the United States of America against Cuba amounts to $833.7 billion, if one takes into account the depreciation of the dollar with respect to the price of gold on the international market. During all these years, the blockade has caused damage of over $121 billion, using current prices.

The Movement of Non-Aligned Countries considers the establishment of diplomatic relations between Cuba and the United States to be an initial positive step in the process towards the normalization of bilateral relations. At the same time, it should be noted that the blockade has remained unchanged. Indeed, under the

current Administration, the blockade has been further tightened, and its territorial application has been intensified through the imposition of 42 fines on entities, both foreign and American, amounting to $13.2 billion. While the regulations issued by the Departments of Commerce and the Treasury on 15 January 2015 were steps in the right direction in areas such as travel to Cuba, telecommunication and remittances, they are limited in scope and only modify some aspects related to the implementation of the blockade.

Despite the historic decision of the United States President to notify the Congress of his decision to remove Cuba from the so-called list of State sponsors of international terrorism — a list on which Cuba should never have been included — that has not meant an easing of the intricacies of all the prohibitions and restrictions established by the blockade laws and regulations imposed against this fraternal country.

Given what I have just said, the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries maintains its call for an end to the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States against Cuba. That was reiterated during the seventeenth Summit of the Heads of State and Government, held on Margarita Island in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on 17 and 18 September. The vote in the General Assembly last year in favour of resolution 70/5 by 191 Member States constituted an expression of unanimity within the international community in demanding the end of the 50-year embargo and adherence to the principles of mutual respect and non-interference in the internal affairs of Cuba.

Currently, over 190 nations have economic and political relations with Cuba, while the United States remains alone in pursuing its unjustified policy of economic sanctions. The Movement of Non-Aligned Countries once again urges the United States of America to yield to the will of the overwhelming majority of the international community and to rectify its failed policies by fully complying with the General Assembly resolutions calling for an immediate and complete end to the embargo imposed on Cuba.

Finally, the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries reiterates that full respect for the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations is an essential element in the maintenance of international peace and security and that the international community should continue working to eliminate unilateral coercive measures, as they are illegal, such as the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba.

Now, in my national capacity, I wish to say that the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela will vote in favour of draft resolution A/71/L.3, for we are convinced that the new statement by the General Assembly rejecting the blockade imposed by the United States against Cuba reflects our firm position with regard to unrestricted respect for the purposes and principles that sustain the international legal and political order in support of the maintenance of harmonious and stable relations among the Member States of this Organization.

The blockade imposed on the brotherly people of Cuba for 56 years has shown itself today to be a total failure. Its only objective has been the supposed desire to restrict the right to self-determination of that country and to defeat the Cuban revolution. Despite the obstacles created by that unilateral measure, Cuba has been able to deal with the illegal action, maintaining its sovereignty and political independence with dignity under the banners of international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

We wish to point out that the American policy of sanctions has been wrong and has drawn attention to the extraordinary capacity and political determination of the Cuban people and the intrinsic moral force of the heirs of the legacy of José Martí.

Therefore, in contrast to the destabilizing purposes and plans of the supporters of that illegal policy, Cuba has been characterized throughout its revolutionary history, under the leadership of Commander Fidel Castro and the current President, Mr. Raúl Castro, by its spirit of solidarity with the sister countries of the developing world, providing, despite its economic difficulties, unbiased help and solidarity to peoples with humanitarian needs arising from natural disasters or epidemics like Ebola and cholera. It deploys specialized medical personnel to help victims of those diseases in any corner of the globe.

Venezuela therefore once again urges the Government of the United States to put an immediate end to the economic, commercial and financial blockade against this Latin American and Caribbean sister country and to make that happen in harmony with the process of the normalization of bilateral relations between the two countries.

The defeat of the blockade is a moral and political victory for the people of the Cuban revolution against the largest empire on Earth. Long live Cuba! Long live Chavez! Long live Fidel! Venceremos!

Mr. Sandoval Mendiolea (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the representative of the Dominican Republic on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States.

As in previous years, Mexico once again reiterates its rejection of the unilateral action against the Republic of Cuba, including the imposition for more than five decades of the economic, commercial and financial blockade, which runs counter to international law and the relations of friendship and cooperation that must prevail among States.

Only a month ago, the President of Mexico, Mr. Enrique Peña Nieto, reiterated before the General Assembly (see A/71/PV.10) my country's call for the lifting of the economic, commercial and financial blockade against Cuba, which will produce a climate of detente and understanding in our region. The Government of Mexico today reaffirms that call and confirms that it will support the draft resolution before the Assembly (A/71/L.3), as it invariably has in previous years.

Mexico welcomes the progress in the process of normalization of the relations between Cuba and the United States of America, two important neighbours and partners for my country, but it is aware that full normalization requires eliminating the economic, commercial and financial blockade against Cuba. My country recognizes the measures that the President of the United States has implemented to ease the blockade, but it knows that lifting the blockade is within the purview of the United States Congress.

The Republic of Cuba is undertaking efforts to update its economic and social model. The elimination of the embargo would facilitate the restructuring of the Cuban economy and allow its full reintegration and access to international trade flows and investment. Mexico recognizes the actions taken by the Government of the Republic of Cuba to fulfil its international commitments in the field of development. Despite the adverse circumstances that it has confronted for more than 50 years, Cuba has high human development indices in the areas of labour, health, education and the environment, among others, as recently recognized in the United Nations Development Programme's *2016 Regional Human Development Report for Latin America and the Caribbean*. With an end to the blockade, Cuba will be able to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and fully achieve its 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

My country supports the process of updating the Cuban economic and social model and intends to contribute to that process, if so requested.

Mr. Liu Jieyi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China associates itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Thailand on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

A year ago, the United Nations development summit adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which launched new prospects for international cooperation for development. The comprehensive implementation of the 2030 Agenda is, and will be for some time to come, the central task in the field of development.

Countries should work on the basis of equality, engage in cooperation guided by an open and inclusive approach and seek common development through win-win cooperation with a view to sharing the fruits of development. Such circumstances call for putting an immediate end to the economic embargo and sanctions imposed by the United States against Cuba.

The General Assembly has for 24 consecutive years adopted by an overwhelming majority a resolution on the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba, and urging all States to comply with the Charter of the United Nations and the norms of international law, and rescind or abolish measures that have extraterritorial effects affecting the sovereignty of other States, the legitimate interests of entities or persons under their jurisdiction and the freedom of trade and navigation.

It is regrettable that for so many years none of those resolutions have been implemented, and the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States against Cuba still remains in effect. Such violations of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant General Assembly resolutions have caused enormous economic and financial losses for Cuba and impeded the efforts of the Cuban people to eradicate poverty and

promote sustainable economic and social development. It has not only undermined the Cuban people's right to life and development, but has also affected the normal economic, commercial and financial exchanges between other countries and Cuba.

China has always stood for respect for the right of countries to freely choose their social systems and their path towards development. It opposes unilateral sanctions against other countries by military, political, economic or any other means. China has always strictly complied with and implemented the relevant General Assembly resolutions. China and Cuba have maintained economic, commercial and personal exchanges, and a friendly and mutually beneficial cooperation in various areas between our two countries has been steadily developing. Not long ago, Premier Li Keqiang visited Cuba, at which time the leaders of our two countries reached a broad common understanding on the further deepening of the pragmatic cooperation between China and Cuba in line with the aspirations of our two peoples and in the interest of the economic and social development of Cuba.

In our times, characterized by multipolarization, economic globalization, cultural diversity and the democratization of international relations, the general trend is towards exchange and cooperation among countries on an equal footing. Dialogue among equals and amicable consultations represent the best way to resolve differences.

Mr. Zamora Rivas (El Salvador), Vice-President, took the Chair.

China has taken note of the measures taken by the United States to ease the constraints it has imposed on Cuba with regard to commerce, trade and tourism, and we hope that the United States and Cuba will continue to work towards the normalization of their relations. We hope that the United States will fully repeal its embargo policy against Cuba at an early date and develop normal State-to-State relations with it, in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the basic norms governing international relations. That is in the common interest of both countries and their peoples and in the interest of the peace and stability of the Americas and the common development of the international community.

China will once again vote in favour of the draft resolution, A/71/L.3, submitted by Cuba.

Mrs. Nguyen (Viet Nam): At the outset, I would like to extend my warmest welcome to Mr. Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cuba.

Viet Nam aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of the Group of 77 and China, the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

We greatly appreciate the Secretary-General's comprehensive report (A/71/91), which lays out the positions of Member States on ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba and assessments by United Nations agencies of the impact of the blockade.

On 27 October 2015, Viet Nam joined with 190 other delegations in voting in favour of resolution 70/5. The adoption of that resolution by an overwhelming majority once again sent a strong message from the international community calling on the United States of America to end its embargo against Cuba. It is our principled position that Viet Nam opposes the imposition of any unilateral embargo and coercive measures by one State on another.

Today Viet Nam will vote unreservedly in favour of draft resolution A/71/L.3 in its entirety. By its vote Viet Nam wishes to reiterate its firm belief that the United States blockade against Cuba, which has lasted for more than five decades, is contrary to international law and the fundamental principles of the Charter of the United Nations and has caused untold hardship to the Cuban people. That policy runs counter to the common intentions of all nations in the world to build international relations on a sound and equitable basis, regardless of their political systems and with respect for each nation's right to choose its own path of development.

Viet Nam welcomes the restoration of full diplomatic ties between Cuba and the United States and the outcomes of President Barack Obama's visit to Cuba in March. We also welcome the latest decision by the United States President to issue his policy directive on Cuba on 14 October and to announce a group of measures to modify the application of some aspects of the embargo. We hope that such progressive steps will create a political dynamic that will eventually lead to the repeal of the blockade, which poses an essential obstacle to the normalization of relations between the two countries.

Once again, Viet Nam joins with other delegations to call on the United States to put an immediate end to the economic, commercial and financial blockade against Cuba. The lifting of the embargo would meet the aspirations of both the American and the Cuban peoples. It would be beneficial both for the people of the region and for peace, stability and prosperity in the region and the world.

My delegation wishes to take this opportunity to reiterate Viet Nam's friendship, cooperation and solidarity with Cuba. We will continue to do our utmost to help the people of Cuba to overcome the difficulties and challenges imposed by the embargo.

Mr. Llorentty Soliz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, Bolivia welcomes the presence among us of Comrade Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba.

Once again, Bolivia joins the concert of the nations of the world to condemn and repudiate, most energetically, the unilateral, immoral, unjust, illegal, anachronistic and criminal economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States against Cuba for more than half a century.

I will take advantage of these few minutes to pay tribute to the Cuban people and its revolution. I am convinced that the best way of doing so is to pay tribute to the person who, as the Argentine writer Julio Cortázar said, was the sculptor of the revolution. I am thinking here about Fidel Castro Ruz, who, as the world knows, recently celebrated his ninetieth birthday. He resisted throughout the terms of 11 American Presidents, and he won. He has survived more than 600 attacks against his life organized by the empire. Never in the history of humankind have there been so many plans and so many resources devoted to ending the life of a single person. Fidel has a special place — a privileged place — in the hearts and in the history of the liberation of peoples. He has shaped the most solidary-replete revolution in the history of humankind and has brought us closer to the utopia of a better world.

Cuba's people, our people, have witnessed the marvellous solidarity of the Cuban revolution. My brothers and sisters from Africa know what I am talking about. Cuba is the only non-African country that fought against the regime of apartheid. Another titan of history, Nelson Mandela, said the following,

> "I am a loyal man, and I will never forget that, in the darkest moments of our country in the fight against apartheid, Fidel Castro was on our side."

Our brothers and sisters of Asia and Pacific also know the Cubans, because Cuba has been in the front lines helping victims of earthquakes and typhoons in distant regions. Ho Chi Minh, the great Vietnamese leader, said that Cubans, with Fidel as their leader, were in solidarity with his people and their struggle, and that the Vietnamese would never forget that support. In my own region, in Latin America and the Caribbean, countless lives have been saved by Cuban doctors. Countless people know how to read and write thanks to teachers from Cuba. Our President Morales Ayma has noted that the Cubans shared the little that they had, and they did so in a disinterested way; they never asked anything from anyone — no mining, oil or forestry resources — for their solidarity.

From this rostrum Fidel not only encouraged humankind, but he led the fight against arms, against nuclear weapons, against debt, against the pillaging of our natural resources, against the anti-democratic financial and monetary system, against climate change and against hunger, disease and inequality — in summary, against capitalism and imperialism and for the building of a new international order.

Today we are not only voting against the blockade; we are voting for hope and for the marvellous possibility of making a better world. Cuba is the example to be followed, and Fidel is the symbol of the dignity of our peoples.

I wish to apologize to you, sir,, but when one is full of gratitude in one's heart, the last thing one is thinking about is protocol. That is why I wish to conclude by saying, "Long live Fidel! Long live Cuba!"

Mr. Lal (India): India associates itself with the statement by the representative of Thailand on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and the statement by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

We welcome the Foreign Minister of Cuba among us here today.

India welcomes the restoration of diplomatic relations between Cuba and the United States of America, the historic visit of the President of the United States to Cuba in March and the further developments in that regard since then.

For more than two decades now, the General Assembly has considered annually the issue of the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States against Cuba. It has consistently rejected the imposition of laws and regulations with extraterritorial impact and all other forms of coercive economic measures that hurt the progress and prosperity of people the world over. The Assembly has also called upon all States, in conformity with their obligations under the Charter of the United Nations and international law, to refrain from promulgating and applying laws and measures that have extraterritorial effects affecting the sovereignty of other States, as well as to repeal and invalidate any such laws. There can be little doubt that the continued existence of the embargo against Cuba, in contravention of world opinion as expressed by the Assembly, undermines multilateralism and the credibility of the United Nations itself.

As the world's largest democracy, with an abiding faith in multilateralism, India stands in solidarity with the international community in its unambiguous rejection of domestic laws having extraterritorial impact. Embargoes impede the full achievement of economic and social development by the population of the affected country, in particular where children and women are concerned. They also hinder the overall enjoyment of human rights, including the right to development, food, medical care and social services, among other things.

Successive reports of the Secretary-General have established — and this year's report (A/71/91) is no exception — that the embargo, particularly through its extraterritorial effects, has adversely affected the Cuban people and the development efforts of the country. At the same time, we would like to acknowledge the notable socioeconomic and developmental achievements of the Cuban people, in particular the high Human Development Index ranking of Cuba and its achievement of several of the Millennium Development Goals. The continued embargo would severely impact Cuba's ability to implement the comprehensive 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Cuba's expertise in health care, achieved despite the conditions imposed by the embargo, enabled it to respond quickly, effectively and in a substantial manner to the call made by the General Assembly two years ago to all nations to respond to the Ebola crisis in Africa.

In launching the transformative 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, world leaders again strongly urged all States to refrain from unilateral economic, financial or trade measures not in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations. The international community needs to redouble its efforts to promote an environment free from sanctions and embargoes.

India hopes that the ongoing positive developments in the relations between Cuba and the United States will lead to the withdrawal of the embargo at the earliest possible date. India supports draft resolution A/71/L.3, submitted by Cuba.

Mr. Mangisi (Tonga): Let me start by recognizing and welcoming the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, His Excellency Mr. Bruno Eduardo Rodríguez Parrilla.

We also align our statement with that delivered by the representative of the Kingdom of Thailand as Chair of the Group of 77 and China.

As speakers have reiterated before me, and as undoubtedly the majority will do so after me as well, the decades of the operation of the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by our friend the United States on another friend of ours, Cuba, has caused and continues to cause significant economic damage, counted in the billions of dollars, resulting in the continuing immeasurable suffering of the people of Cuba. As the longest-lasting system of unilateral sanctions ever applied to one country, it unjustly hinders the economic and social development of the Cuban people. As a fellow small island developing State facing similar challenges, we feel and recognize the injustice of the embargo. We therefore join the call to end the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed against Cuba.

Our call this morning cuts deeper, at a more personal level as well. In talking about friendships between our country and the United States and Cuba, our solidarity regarding the hardships and challenges imposed on the Cuban people should be understood at a personal level, given that we have nationals who are living side by side with the Cuban people on the ground as students. As a friend of the United States, we wish to reiterate again to the United States that the effects of such an archaic form of interference and intervention in the domestic and sovereign affairs of Cuba also results in undue difficulty to the lives of our nationals who are

striving, along with the Cuban people, to get by on a daily basis.

My Permanent Representative, who unfortunately cannot be here today because of official travel, looks forward to presenting his credentials in Havana next month and to meeting with our nationals in the hope of getting some reprieve for them because of the difficult situation that they are living in owing to the challenges imposed on them by the embargo, and thereby, by extension, on Tonga as a country. It is more personal to us to that extent, and, as a friend to a friend, we reach out to the United States to encourage it to see the negativity that the embargo creates, not only in terms of its relationship with Cuba but also for other countries that may be, or are, unduly affected as well by the embargo, like my own.

We recognize the positive steps that the United States has taken to date in its relationship with Cuba. Clearly, though, those steps may not be enough, as the Cuban people, along with our own nationals, are still experiencing challenges, which we often do not recognize, and they are being deprived of things that we take for granted here in the comforts of New York and at Headquarters. With elections looming here in the host country, we pray that the good works of the current Administration will be carried forward and that, in the meantime, the President of the United States will still use his executive powers to improve further its relations with Cuba before having to resort to congressional action.

We therefore reiterate our support for the right of the Cuban people to enjoy full freedom in their economic and social development, and we call for an end to the embargo imposed upon them.

Mr. Moustafa (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I align myself with the statements delivered by the representative of Thailand on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, by the representative of Kuwait on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and by the representative of the Niger on behalf of the Group of African States. I would also like to make the following additional brief remarks.

It is with great pleasure that we welcome His Excellency Mr. Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, and assure him of Egypt's enduring full support for and solidarity with the people and the Government of Cuba.

This year has witnessed important developments in the bilateral relations between Cuba and the United States, including the visit by the United States President to Cuba last March. We welcome such developments in bilateral relations and encourage further steps along that path. Nonetheless, the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States against Cuba remains in place. The impact of such unilateral measures and the cost imposed on the Cuban people and economy are staggering. Between March 2015 and March 2016 the cost of the sanctions imposed on Cuba has been estimated at over $4.68 billion — a staggering amount.

As I mentioned earlier, Egypt will always be a steadfast supporter of the rights of the Cuban people and their demands to end the current situation. We reject the current unilateral embargo policy, which transgresses international legitimacy. For five decades that policy has adversely affected the Cuban people's access to food, medicines, education and advanced technology.

We encourage the United States to take brave decisions and steps to immediately lift of the embargo imposed on Cuba. We hope that such steps will pave the way for the normalization of the bilateral relations between the two countries in all spheres.

Mr. Mminele (South Africa): South Africa aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representative of the Kingdom of Thailand on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

We also acknowledge the presence of the Foreign Minister of Cuba.

My delegation supports draft resolution A/71/L.3. We believe that it provides a good basis for finally ending the embargo against Cuba and its people. South Africa and Cuba have a long-standing relationship and solidarity dating back to the struggle against apartheid and colonialism in Southern Africa. We take note of the report of the Secretary-General (A/71/91) issued on 21 July, which provides an assessment of where we are on the issue.

The Government of South Africa welcomes the historic rapprochement between the United States of America and Cuba and the visit to Cuba by President

Barack Obama in March — the first visit to Cuba by a sitting President of the United States in nearly 90 years. We hope that the next United States President will carry forward that rapprochement, as well as take all the necessary measures within his or her broad executive powers to deal with all outstanding issues.

South Africa remains seriously concerned about the illegal nature of the imposition of the blockade and about the immense human and economic suffering and hardship endured by the people of Cuba for more than half a century. Almost two years after the Governments of Cuba and the United States decided to rekindle their diplomatic relations and begin a process towards the normalization of their diplomatic relations, there have been no substantial changes in the application of the embargo policy in the national banking system.

Cuban monetary assets abroad continue to be persecuted by the embargo and its repercussions. That unhealthy state of affairs cannot be allowed to carry on, as it adversely affects the economic aspirations of Cuba and its people. It is critical that banking institutions in Cuba be permitted to make financial transactions in United States dollars so that bilateral and commercial relations between the two countries can be tangible and meaningful.

The current dire situation is aggravated by the state of uncertainty faced by banks in third countries. We would like to request Member States to support Cuba and its people by scrapping any domestic laws or regulations that continue to hamper the development of Cuba and its people.

Cuba continues to be a beacon of hope for many developing countries, and it plays its role in making this world a better place for all humankind. However, for Cuba the embargo remains the most significant obstacle in its quest to realize its development objectives, including those enshrined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In the midst of the current global challenges and related uncertainties that continue to hamper the economic development of the Global South, there are positive activities taking place under South-South cooperation. In that regard, South Africa would like to make a special mention of one of Cuba's many contributions to South Africa.

Under the auspices of the South Africa-Cuba agreement on cooperation in the fields of public health and medical sciences, over 2,800 South African students are currently undertaking medical training in Cuba in order to help them qualify as medical doctors. So far, 500 South Africans from disadvantaged backgrounds have graduated as medical doctors after receiving training in Cuba.

In conclusion, the Republic of South Africa reiterates its unconditional support for the implementation of this year's draft resolution on the embargo. We take this opportunity to appeal once again to the international community to redouble its efforts to promote constructive and transparent dialogue between the two countries with a view to achieving the objectives of all the many previous resolutions adopted by the United Nations on the matter and to ensuring the sustainable further progress of the people of Cuba. The international community cannot, and should not, wait any longer for this matter to be resolved, if we are truly committed to leaving no one behind.

Mr. Sobrai Duarte (Brazil) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation aligns itself with the statements made by the representative of Thailand on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and by the representative of the Dominican Republic on behalf of Community of Latin American and Caribbean States. I make the following statement in my national capacity.

For decades the Brazilian Government has supported the normalization of the relations between the United States of America and Cuba. It was with great satisfaction that Brazil received the news of the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries, thus overcoming anachronistic animosities and generating positive effects for our entire region. It is especially symbolic that, almost 90 years after the last United States presidential visit to Cuba, President Barack Obama visited Havana in March this year.

We enthusiastically welcome the recent appointments of the Cuban Ambassador to Washington and the United States Ambassador to Havana, which is still awaiting approval from the United States Senate. We also welcome the concrete measures directly affecting the lives of citizens in both countries, such as the establishment of aerial, maritime and postal links and the facilitation of financial remittances.

Despite those advances, the well-being of the Cuban people, particularly those who are the poorest and most vulnerable, continues to be negatively affected by the blockade. We recognize the efforts of the President of

the United States to put an end to the embargo, and we consider it essential that the United States Congress begin discussions regarding the elimination of the embargo. The lifting of the embargo against Cuba has the indisputable support of the international community, made clear by the 191 votes in favour of resolution 70/5 at the previous session of the General Assembly.

My delegation is confident that the time has come for dialogue and cooperation, which could promptly lead to the end of the blockade.

Mr. Sevilla Borja (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): The unilateral blockade imposed by the United States against Cuba for 56 years is a blatant example of the reprehensible implementation of power politics. It will remain in the annals of history as a clear demonstration of abusive behaviour by a super-Power against a dignified and proud people who jealously cling to their sovereignty. This is shameful disregard by that super-Power for international law and the virtually unanimous opinion of the international community, which year after year at the General Assembly has demanded an end to that policy.

That behaviour comes from a country that in 1776 inspired the peoples of the world with its struggle for decolonization, independence and freedom. It is the country that joined the Allies to defeat nazism and fascism, thereby saving humankind. An original signatory of the Charter of San Francisco, its people, under the leadership of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X, fought for the equality of human beings without regard for the colour of their skin. We hope that President Obama, who has lately taken bold, positive steps with regard to Cuba, will now, at the end of his term, adopt measures consistent with the best traditions of the history of his country.

With draft resolution A/71/L.3, which we will adopt in a few minutes, such anti-historical stubbornness to maintain an illegal and abusive blockade will be morally condemned once more, to the embarrassment of its practitioners. The Cuban people already triumphed, and their revolution persists and serves as an example.

Mrs. Rubiales de Chamorro (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank our dear colleagues from Cuba, including our brother and comrade Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez, for their presence here today.

We appreciate the updated information for the year 2016 that we have received in the Secretary-General's report on the impact of the criminal economic, financial and commercial blockade against the people and the Government of Cuba (A/71/91).

Cuba knows of and can be assured of our support and our unconditional solidarity. The Cuban revolution started with firmness and determination in its first steps towards dignity and the restitution of the political, economic and social rights of the peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean. After a more than five decades of resistance, the Cuban people and Government have created values personalizing dignity and sovereignty, reaffirming their socialist revolution and humanist values.

Cuba has always been the first to respond to our needs of all kinds in disasters or emergency situations. With reference to the Cuba of Fidel and Raúl and all their daughters and sons, Commander President Daniel Ortega rightly said at the ninetieth birthday celebration of Fidel:

> "We have learned so much from Fidel. He has taught us so much by his ardent words, his eloquence, his unique mission of justice, solidarity and complementarity in our efforts to unite and develop together our vigor and talents, our cultures and our citizenship in a free, sovereign and independent nation. Our American and Caribbean peoples — homeland and fighting peoples, homeland and valiant peoples, homeland and peoples who have forged revolution and evolution in dignity and pride."

We are delighted with the restoration of the relationship between Cuba and the United States of America. However, it is disappointing to note that the blockade continues. Despite the measures announced, the blockade persists. There are also the persistent will and policies to promote and impose changes in the economic, political and social order of Cuba, and the intention to continue developing programmes of interference.

It is unacceptable to our country that coercive and unilateral economic measures are being used as a selective political instrument to attack independent peoples and to implement policies of regime change. The prolonged negative effect of the blockade has been and continues to be the main obstacle to the sustainable development of the Cuban people. It is totally contrary to the approval of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its implementation, to

which all Member States have committed. The historic and anachronistic blockade imposed on that heroic people and Government in violation of international law has been rejected by 191 countries, affirming that the mobilizing role of the international community has been, and will continue to be, essential for the lifting of the blockade.

While the Government of the United States of America persists in its failed and isolated policy against the people and Government of Cuba, and while it continues to ignore the universal call by the peoples of the world, including its own, the General Assembly will continue to demand the end and total dismantling of its inhumane, illegal and criminal blockade, which is supported by just two countries that have rebelled against the will of the international community. As long as the United States does not abandon its policy of interference and imposition, whether through coercive measures or efforts to achieve a change of Government, against Cuba and other developing countries, we will have to continue presenting draft resolutions on the topic to the General Assembly. My delegation will continue to support such draft resolutions, including that in A/71/L.3, presented today by our sister country of Cuba. We will vote in favour of it.

The international community hopes that in 2016 the United States will finally demonstrate greater political will so that this draft resolution can be adopted without a vote and we can finally witness the end of the blockade against Cuba, which will require guarantees ensuring the practical, total and complete dismantling of the blockade. Then the United States will be acting in harmony with the desires and aspirations of the international community.

In conclusion, I reiterate that Latin America and the Caribbean will continue to demand that the Government of the United States change its policy towards our continent. We want peace, respect and non-interference and the final and complete dismantling of the criminal blockade against Cuba, as well as the return to the fraternal Cuban people of their legitimate territory of Guantánamo.

Ms. Power (United States of America): For more than 50 years, the United States had a policy aimed at isolating the Government of Cuba. For roughly half of those years, Member States voted overwhelmingly for a General Assembly draft resolution condemning the United States embargo and calling for it to be ended. The United States has always voted against this draft resolution; today the United States will abstain. Let me explain why.

In December 2014, President Obama made clear his opposition to the embargo and called on our Congress to take action to lift it. Yet while the Obama Administration agrees that the United States embargo on Cuba should be lifted, it is not for the reason stated in the draft resolution before us (A/71/L.3). All actions of the United States with regard to Cuba have been, and are, in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations and international law, including applicable trade law and the customary law of the sea. We categorically reject the statements in the draft resolution that suggest otherwise.

But the draft resolution being voted on today is a perfect example of why the United States policy of isolation towards Cuba was not working — or worse, how it was actually undermining the very goals it set out to achieve. Instead of isolating Cuba, our policy has, as President Obama has repeatedly said, isolated the United States, including right here at the United Nations.

Under President Obama we have adopted a new approach: rather than to try to close off Cuba from the rest of the world, we want the world of opportunities and ideas to open its doors to the people of Cuba. After over 50 years of pursuing the path of isolation, we have chosen to take the path of engagement, because, as President Obama said in Havana, we recognize that the future of the island of course lies in the hands of the Cuban people.

In the nearly two years since President Obama announced the shift in our approach, we have amended the regulations implementing the embargo six times — most recently on 14 October — while finding ways to increase engagement between our Governments and our peoples. We have re-established diplomatic relations with the Government of Cuba, reopened embassies in our respective capitals, resumed regularly scheduled commercial flights between the United States and Cuba, facilitated people-to-people travel, eased restrictions on American businesses and entrepreneurs who want to do business in Cuba, and stopped limiting how often Cuban-Americans can visit their families on the island.

President Obama memorably became the first sitting United States President to visit Cuba since 1928;

and, in a much more modest journey here in New York, I made the first visit by a United States Ambassador to the United Nations to Cuba's Permanent Mission to the United Nations since the Cuban revolution. Today we add to that list the first United States abstention on the General Assembly draft resolution calling for the embargo to be ended.

Abstaining on the draft resolution does not mean that the United States agrees with all of the policies and practices of the Cuban Government. We do not. We are profoundly concerned by the serious human rights violations that the Cuban Government continues to commit with impunity against its own people — including arbitrarily detaining those who criticize the Government, threatening, intimidating and at times physically assaulting citizens who take part in peaceful marches and meetings and severely restricting the access that people on the island have to outside information.

As President Obama made clear when he travelled to Havana, we believe that the Cuban people, like all peoples, are entitled to basic human rights, such as the right to speak their minds without fear and the right to assemble, organize and protest peacefully. We say that not because those views reflect a United States-centric conception of rights, but rather because they are universal human rights — enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights — that all 193 Member States are supposed to respect and defend. They are rights that are essential for the dignity of men, women and children regardless of where they live or what kind of Government they have.

Let me be among the first to acknowledge that, as our Cuban counterparts have often pointed out, the United States has work to do in ensuring those rights for our own citizens. We know that at times in our history United States leaders and citizens have used the pretext of promoting democracy and human rights in the region to justify actions that have left a deep legacy of mistrust. We recognize that our history, in which there is so much that makes us proud, also gives us ample reason to be humble.

We also recognize the areas in which the Cuban Government has made significant progress in advancing the welfare of its people, from significantly reducing its child mortality rate to ensuring that girls have the same access to primary and secondary school as boys.

But none of that means that we should stay silent when the rights of the Cuban people are being violated — as Member States here at the United Nations have too often done. That is why the United States raised those concerns directly with the Cuban Government during our historic dialogue on human rights in Havana on 14 October, which shows that, while our Governments continue to disagree on fundamental questions of human rights, we have found a way to discuss those issues in a respectful and reciprocal manner. We urge other Member States to speak up about those issues as well.

The United States believes that there is a great deal that we can do together with Cuba to tackle global challenges. That includes here at the United Nations, where the decades-long enmity between our nations has at best been a distraction from and, at worst, an obstacle to carrying out some of the most important work of this institution and helping the world's most vulnerable people.

Let me conclude by giving just one example — a very moving example. In 2014, we were confronted with the deadliest outbreak of Ebola in our planet's history. The most dire predictions estimated that more than 1 million people could be infected within a few months. Yet while experts made clear that the only way to stop the epidemic was to confront it at its source, the international community was slow to step up. Many were paralysed.

It was in that context that President Obama decided to deploy more than 3,000 United States personnel to the epicentre of the outbreak, where they joined hundreds of Americans working for non-governmental organizations and humanitarian agencies in the hardest-hit areas. President Obama also set about rallying other Member States to do their part. One of the very first countries to step forward was Cuba, which sent more than 200 health professionals to the region — an awe-inspiring contribution for a country of just 11 million people.

One of them was a 43-year-old Cuban doctor named Félix Báez Sarria, who was dispatched to an Ebola treatment unit in Sierra Leone. In the course of treating those infected, Dr. Báez Sarria came down with the symptoms of the virus, and he quickly went from being the doctor to being a patient. As his condition deteriorated, he was airlifted to Geneva, where for two days he drifted in and out of consciousness. He

nearly died, yet miraculously he pulled through, and eventually returned to Havana, where he says he regained his strength by cradling his 2-year-old son.

I would like members to think, just for one moment, about what it took to save the life of Dr. Báez Sarria — a man who risked his life to save people from a country on the other side of the world. He was initially treated in the clinic where he worked, which had been built with the help of a United States-based non-governmental organization. From there he was transported to a clinic run by doctors from the British Ministry of Defence. Then he was airlifted to Switzerland aboard a medical transport plane operated by an American charter service. Upon arriving at the hospital in Geneva he was treated by Swiss doctors with a Canadian-developed experimental treatment.

Look at all the nations that played a part in saving the life of that brave doctor — a doctor who, after recuperating in Havana, actually chose to return to Sierra Leone so that he could rejoin his colleagues in the field in saving the lives of Sierra Leoneans. Dr. Báez Sarria and all his colleagues belonged to Cuba's Henry Reeve Contingent, which responds to international disasters and epidemics. It takes its name from a young American born in Brooklyn, who at the age of 19 travelled to Cuba to join the country's struggle for independence and gave his life, in 1876, fighting alongside Cubans for their freedom.

The President returned to the Chair.

When Dr. Báez Sarria returned to Sierra Leone he was asked why he had come back after all he had been through. He said simply,

> "I needed to come back. Ebola is a challenge that I must fight to the finish here in order to keep it from spreading to the rest of the world."

What I have just described is what the United Nations looks like when it works. Noble efforts like those are precisely why the United States and Cuba must continue to find ways to engage, even as our differences persist. Today we will take another small step to be able to do that. May there be many more — including, we hope, finally ending the United States embargo once and for all.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, to introduce draft resolution A/71/L.3.

Mr. Rodríguez Parrilla (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Almost two years have passed since President Barack Obama announced his willingness to use his executive powers and to work with Congress to lift the blockade against Cuba. During that period, the three Cuban anti-terrorist fighters returned; the unjustifiable inclusion of Cuba on the so-called list of State sponsors of international terrorism was eliminated; diplomatic relations were restored and embassies were reopened in the respective capitals; and the President of the United States, the Secretary of State and other members of the Cabinet visited Havana, along with dozens of senators, representatives and persons from many sectors.

There is no doubt that progress has been made in dialogue and cooperation on issues of common interest, and a dozen agreements rendering reciprocal benefits have been signed. And now the United States has just announced that it will abstain in the voting on draft resolution A/71/L.3.

However, the economic, commercial and financial blockade persists, harming the Cuban people and hindering the country's economic development. Given its marked extraterritorial character, the blockade also directly affects all States Members of the United Nations. The United States leader and other senior officials have described it as obsolete, useless in advancing American interests, failed, meaningless and unviable, a burden for citizens that harms the Cuban people and causes the United States to be isolated. The embargo should be lifted.

It has taken 24 years to change the lone vote of the United States of America in this Hall. It has been 24 years, as Ambassador Samantha Power has said, of isolation and failure. The 58 years of heroic resistance by our people serve as a backdrop for what is occurring. At this time, I am thinking of my people, of Fidel and Raúl, and of the young Cubans who have inherited our long, glorious struggle.

Some people have asked me why I am introducing the draft resolution again to the General Assembly. I cannot in any way underestimate the powerful political and moral message that the Assembly is sending to the peoples of the world. Truth always opens the way; justice ends up winning. The abstention just announced is certainly a positive step for the future of improving relations between the United States and Cuba. I thank Ambassador Power for her words and efforts.

However, most of the executive regulations and laws establishing the blockade remain in force and are being rigorously implemented by United States Government agencies. We recognize that the executive measures adopted by the Government of the United States are positive steps, but they have a very limited scope and effect. The measures taken in the area of telecommunications, unfortunately, pursue openly declared political and interventionist objectives, but they show how broad the powers of the President are. If he wanted to, he could authorize, tomorrow, trade, private loans and investments in all sectors of the Cuban economy.

The measures relating to trade with small private businesses — which measures are also, unfortunately, explicitly politically motivated — will not work on a substantial scale as long as the economic organization and structures of Cuba's foreign trade are not taken into account. Nevertheless, they show that in the area of trade there could be progress even if the blockade laws remain unchanged.

Some United States spokespersons have said that the Cuban system hinders the implementation of such measures. They know that that is not correct. It is the whole of the embargo that determines the current reality. It is obvious and well known that the President of the United States has broad executive powers that he has not used. He could substantially modify the practical implementation of the blockade and its humanitarian and economic impact. Does this change of vote mean that he will use those powers with determination?

Only 12 days ago, the United States Department of the Treasury and the Department of Commerce announced new measures that, although positive, have very limited scope. Mostly they are designed to broaden previously authorized transactions. Rather than benefit Cuba and the Cuban people, they favour the United States.

There is some good news. From now on, United States citizens who are authorized by their Government to visit Cuba or are travelling to other countries, will be allowed to buy and carry with them in their personal luggage Cuban products, without a limit on value, including rum and tobacco — whatever will fit into their personal luggage. Nevertheless, exporting those products to the United States is still prohibited. Why is that? Unless there are specific licenses, the new measures allow neither United States investments in our country nor joint ventures, not even for the production of Cuban pharmaceutical and biotechnology products — whose commercialization and distribution in the United States has, fortunately, been authorized, provided they receive approval from the United States Food and Drug Administration.

Exports from the United States to Cuba have not been expanded beyond the previously authorized limited sales, which exclude key sectors of the Cuban economy. No announcement has been made of other changes in the financial sector, thus the ban on opening transfer accounts by Cuban banks in similar United States institutions is still in effect.

For its part, the United States Congress has not approved any of the 20 amendments or legislative initiatives that, with bipartisan support, have proposed eliminating some restrictions in the blockade, or even the whole policy. On the contrary, more than 50 legislative initiatives have been introduced that threaten to reinforce basic aspects of the blockade and to prevent the President from issuing new executive orders or from implementing the measures already adopted. Nor have specific Government actions been undertaken in that regard.

It is therefore necessary to judge on the basis of the facts. The most important and obvious step is to dismantle the blockade — more important than speeches, press statements or even the vote of a delegation in this Hall. To reiterate, we must judge on the basis of the facts.

The human damage resulting from the blockade is incalculable. There is no Cuban family or industry in the country that has not suffered its effects on health, education, food, services, the prices of goods and wages and pensions. The imposition of discriminatory and onerous conditions, together with the deterrent effects of the blockade, restricts food purchases and acquisitions on the United States market of drugs, reagents, spare parts for medical equipment and instruments and others.

The United States company Medtronic could not establish contracts with Cuban companies to sell its deep brain stimulators to treat Cuban patients with Parkinson's disease and other neurological disorders. Very recently it claimed this was due to restrictions of the blockade. Nor was it possible for the multinational company Sigma-Aldrich to provide means of protection and chemical and biotechnological products requested

by the Cuban company Farmacuba for the manufacture of drugs in the country.

In May, the United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission notified the United States branch of the German company Eckert and Ziegler that it would deny its application for a license to provide its products to the Dutch company Philips, which is the calibration source for medical equipment acquired by the Oncology Institute in Cuba in 2013, affecting a vital service for cancer patients.

On 26 September, the Italian supplier of medical equipment Emildue notified the Cuban company Medicuba that the United States company Boston Scientific Corporation refused to sell a radio-frequency generator of the Cosman brand for diagnosing cancer. The blockade also affects the interests of American citizens themselves, who could benefit from various services in Cuba, including health care.

I express thanks to Ambassador Samantha Power for her heartfelt words, and I share her sentiments concerning the symbolic case of Dr. Félix Sarría Báez. That is an example of how much we could accomplish when there is international cooperation.

However, it cannot be forgotten that during the tragic time of the Ebola epidemic in West Africa, the deployment of Cuban medical aid was hampered by the refusal of the British Standard Chartered Bank to make transfers between the World Health Organization and the Cuban Medical Brigades, whose members — including Dr. Sarría Báez — risked their lives serving in direct contact with patients. Even under those extreme conditions, such transfers required specific authorizations from the Treasury Department. The Uganda branch of that bank closed the personal accounts of Cuban health workers in that country, and a Barclays Bank subsidiary also prevented them from making transfers to Cuba. The same thing happened with the Cuban cooperation personnel in the education sector in other countries.

These examples demonstrate the complex reality between the United States and Cuba. Nevertheless, this morning's focus is encouraging. Given the United States change in vote, one could ask whether such practices will cease.

No transfers were possible in August in cases involving maternal, child and ophthalmological services in Algeria, owing to refusals on the part of the transfer services of the Commerzbank of Germany and KBC Bank of Belgium. Under the shameful Cuban Medical Professional Parole Program for Cubans working in other countries, the United States attempts to hamper medical cooperation and to deprive those countries and my own of indispensable, highly qualified human resources. Last month, banks based in Pakistan refused to open a letter of credit requested by a company of that country for the purchase of 100,000 doses of the hepatitis B vaccine, on the grounds that Cuba was a country under United States sanctions.

The legal ban preventing American citizens from freely travelling to Cuba remains in force, which is a violation of their civil liberties and rights — though travel has been facilitated, under general licenses, only for purposes corresponding to the 12 categories authorized by United States law. A United States citizen runs the risk of paying a $100,000 fine for having travelled to Cuba accompanied by several persons.

The blockade continues to be a massive, flagrant and systematic violation of the human rights of all Cuban men and women and qualifies as an act of genocide under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, of 1948. It is an obstacle to international cooperation in humanitarian areas.

According to rigorous, careful and conservative estimates, between April 2015 and March 2016, the direct economic damage incurred by Cuba owing directly to the blockade amounted to $4.68 billion in today's dollars. The economic damage accumulated over almost six decades amounts to $753,688 billion, taking into account the depreciation in the price of gold. At current prices, that amounts to more than $125 billion dollars.

The blockade is the main obstacle to the economic and social development of our people. It constitutes a flagrant violation of international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the Proclamation of Latin America and the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace. Its extraterritorial application adds greater magnitude to its character as a violation of international law. How can one object to these claims? It suffices to read the legal documents.

We welcomed the announcement by the United States Department of the Treasury authorizing my country to use the United States dollar in its international transactions. Thus far, however, Cuba has

been unable to make payments or cash deposits in that currency, owing to fines and the intimidating effects of the blockade. And in third-party countries we have seen an increase in the cessation of operations, the closure of Cuban bank accounts abroad, the denial of credit and the rejection of transfers to or from Cuba.

When trying to access from Cuba the website of the Norton division of the Symantec company — which, among other things, provides services for blocking and removing malware and computer viruses — one reads, "In compliance with applicable United States laws, we are unable to process your request." Many other websites respond that the user does not have permission to access an Internet address from their server, or simply state "access denied".

Other factors in addition to the blockade contribute to our economic difficulties. These include the unjust international economic order, the global crisis, the historical distortions and structural weaknesses of underdevelopment, high dependence on energy and food imports, the effects of climate change and natural disasters, as well as — something that we do not hide — our own mistakes. Our people and the Government have fought hard to overcome that reality.

On 17 April, President Raúl Castro Ruz said,

> "We have the will to develop a respectful dialogue and build a new kind of relationship with the United States, such as has never existed between the two countries, because we are convinced that it can only result in mutual benefits."

More recently, on 17 December, he added,

> "We reaffirm our desire for relations of civilized coexistence with the United States, but Cuba will neither renounce even one of its principles nor compromise on its sovereignty and independence."

Historically, the Government of the United States initially intended to annex Cuba, and when that failed, it tried to exercise domination over it. On the triumph of the Cuban revolution, the United States Government set out to

> "provoke disappointment and discouragement through economic dissatisfaction and hardships ... denying Cuba money and supplies to reduce nominal and real salaries to provoke hunger, desperation and overthrow the Government".

The presidential policy directive published on 14 October states that the Government of the United States recognizes the sovereignty and self-determination of Cuba and that it is up to the Cuban people to make their own choices about their future. However, its misleading language does not hide the intent to alter the constitutional order and promote changes in the economic, political, social and cultural system of Cuba. Nor does it hide the intention to continue to develop interventionist programmes that serve the interests of the United States, nor the intention to infiltrate them into sectors of Cuban society.

The directive says that the United States will not pursue regime change in Cuba, but it admits that the United States will

> "support Cuba's emerging ... civil society; and encourage partners and non-governmental actors to join us in advocating for reforms. While remaining committed to supporting democratic activists ... we will also engage community leaders, bloggers, activists, and other social-issue leaders who can contribute to Cuba's internal dialogue on civic participation."

The directive continues, stating that United States will continue its

> "democracy and broadcasting programmes, while protecting our interests and assets, such as the Guantánamo Bay Naval Station .... The United States Government has no intention to alter the existing lease treaty and other arrangements related to the Guantánamo Bay Naval Station".

When the directive was presented, it was said that "We cannot simply sit back and wait for Cuba to change without getting involved."

The directive claims that Cuba remains indebted to the United States Government for bilateral debts incurred before the Cuban revolution. Maybe they think that the Cuban revolution will pay the debts of the bloody dictator Fulgencio Batista? They should understand that we are already free, precisely because in 1959 we rid ourselves of United States imperialism and the dictatorship that it imposed on us.

George W. Bush's "Initiative for a New Cuba" of 19 May 2002 sought to link the easing of the travel and trade bans in place to internal political and economic changes. Cubans responded on 26 June this year with 8 million signatures in support of the constitutional

amendment — which is part of the Constitution of the Republic of Cuba — that proclaims the irrevocable nature of socialism in our country.

It would be worthwhile to acknowledge that change in Cuba is a sovereign matter of Cubans alone and that Cuba is a truly independent country. That is so because it gained its independence on its own and has defended it, and will continue to defend it, at the price of the greatest sacrifices and risks. It must known that our people seized power, they empowered themselves long ago, and they daily exercise sovereign power, the people's power. Only that explains why we are here today.

We are proud of our history and our culture, which are our most prized treasures. We will never forget our past, because that is the way to never go back to it. We have already chosen our path towards the future. We know that it is long and difficult, but we will not deviate from it out of naiveté or because of sirens' songs or by error. No force on Earth can force us to do that. We have seen many dreams come true, both ours and those we have shared with other peoples. We have plenty of dreams that have yet to be realized. But they are our dreams. We do not need dreams that are alien to our culture or to our history.

The Cuban revolution was made, and is being made every day, for the young people and by the young people. Cuban youth, who seem to be so much of their time, are just as patriotic and anti-imperialist as their parents and grandparents. We have defended, and we will defend, our own values and symbols, which we will be enriching, but they will always be Cuban. We will never change them for others that are alien to us. We will struggle to build a nation that is sovereign, independent, socialist, democratic, prosperous and sustainable. We will not return to capitalism. As was stated by the Leader of the Revolution, Fidel Castro Ruz, on last 19 April:

> "We will improve what needs to be improved, with steadfast loyalty and united strength, as Martí, Maceo and Gómez did during their unstoppable march."

The lifting of the blockade is the key to our being able to advance towards the normalization of relations with the United States. It is what will give some meaning, depth and soundness to what has been achieved. The blockade is unjust, inhuman, immoral and illegal, and should unilaterally and unconditionally cease. The change in vote that Ambassador Power just announced is a promising sign. We hope that it will be reflected in reality.

We are deeply grateful to all the Governments and peoples, parliaments, political parties and social movements, civil society representatives and international and regional organizations that have contributed their voices or votes, year after year, to support the justness and urgency of the abolition of the blockade.

We convey our sincere gratitude to the American people for their growing support for this lofty cause.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/71/L.3.

Before giving the floor to the speaker in explanation of vote before the voting, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

I now call on the representative of Israel.

Mr. Danon (Israel): Israel welcomes the progress achieved in the relations between the United States of America and Cuba and hopes that it will lead to a new era in the region.

The President: We have heard the only speaker in explanation of vote before the voting.

The General Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/71/L.3, entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba".

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte

d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kiribati, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nauru, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Palau, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Against:

None

Abstentions:

Israel, United States of America.

Draft resolution A/71/L.3 was adopted by 191 votes to none, with 2 abstentions (resolution 71/5).

The President: Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote after the voting, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Ružička (Slovakia): Slovakia extends its congratulations to the Cuban delegation.

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. The candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania; the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina; Liechtenstein, a European Free Trade Association country and member of the European Economic Area; and the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this statement.

Since the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between Cuba and the United States and President Obama's appeals to the United States Congress to start working towards the elimination of the embargo, the situation has further evolved. The EU warmly welcomes the measures already taken and encourages their further implementation through relevant steps by both sides. In the meantime, however, fundamental restrictive measures are still in place. Under the new circumstances, they are even more of an anachronism.

Beyond the damaging impact of the embargo on ordinary Cubans, the effects and side effects of extraterritorial legislation and of unilateral administrative and judicial measures are also negatively affecting the economic interests of all. This requires even more urgent action, given the greater opening of the Cuban economy. American legislation such as the Cuban Democracy Act and the Helms-Burton Act extended the effects of the United States embargo to third-party countries. In the framework of its common commercial policy, the European Union has firmly and continuously opposed such extraterritorial measures. While recognizing the decisions of the United States Government to lift sanctions and restrictions on remittances and family travel to Cuba, to allow the provision of certain telecommunications, Internet and financial services and to export tools and building materials in order to support the Cuban people, we cannot accept the unilaterally imposed measures that impede economic and commercial relations with Cuba.

In that context, we warmly welcome the United States and Israeli abstention in the voting.

Contrary to our expectations, the situation for EU financial operators in and with Cuba that are targeted by extraterritorial sanctions has not improved, and has even worsened in some ways. This constitutes undue interference and problems for EU citizens, businesses and non-governmental organizations living, working or operating in Cuba. We expect an early solution to those problems, as normalization with Cuba should apply to all interested parties.

At a summit between the European Union and the United States in London in May 1998, a package was agreed upon that also sought to alleviate the problems with extraterritorial legislation. We advocate the prompt and full implementation of that agreement.

The negotiations on a political dialogue and cooperation agreement concluded in March. That agreement aims to consolidate relations and create an enabling framework for more effective dialogue, improved cooperation and expanded economic relations. The agreement is now being finalized and is slated to be signed in the coming months. The bilateral agreement will put the entire EU-Cuban relationship on a new and solid legal footing. It will also be a game-changer for our relationship and will open more doors and forums for dialogue with Cuba, including on the issues on which we still have fundamental differences.

Human rights are at the core of EU external relations. The second high-level discussion on these issues took place in Havana in June. We are encouraged that no subject will be off limits in those processes. The EU remains determined to pursue a comprehensive dialogue with the Cuban authorities and all sectors of Cuban society.

We reiterate the right of Cuban citizens to make independent decisions about their future. We call on the Cuban Government to fully grant its citizens internationally recognized civil, political and economic rights and freedoms, including the freedom of assembly and the freedom of expression and free access to information, as well as to ratify the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Following the visit of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to food, the Cuban Government should extend invitations to other rapporteurs to visit Cuba.

We note with concern the continued high frequency of short-term arrests, but at the same time we welcome the continued broad application of Cuban citizens' freedom to travel. We also welcome Cuban achievements in health care and education. On the other hand, the slow pace of economic modernization seriously hampers Cuban economic development. In that context, we recall the August 2011 adoption of a package of economic and social reforms by the Cuban Government. We expect that they will be extended and implemented in a manner that will address the key needs of the Cuban population.

The economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States contributes to the economic problems in Cuba, thus negatively affecting the standard of living of the Cuban people and aggravating the humanitarian situation there. Lifting the United States embargo could facilitate the opening of the Cuban economy, to the benefit of the people of Cuba. We again express our rejection of all unilateral measures directed against Cuba that negatively affect third parties' interests and thereby violate commonly accepted rules of international trade.

In the framework of our comprehensive agreement, we will work with Cuban counterparts to consolidate and expand improvements in all of the areas I mentioned. Through its cooperation and the future framework agreement, the European Union is ready to accompany Cuba along its path of reform and modernization. Substantial progress has been achieved in a constructive spirit on the topics of human rights, governance and civil society, inter alia.

Against that background, the member States of the European Union unanimously voted in favour of resolution 71/5. Once again, I congratulate the Cuban delegation for the result of the voting.

Mr. Ri Tong Il (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): The delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea would like to join the previous speaker in extending its warm and heartfelt congratulations to the Cuban delegation.

Let me first express our intention to associate ourselves with the statements by the representative of Venezuela and the representative of Thailand on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Group of 77 and China, respectively.

The delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea voted in favour of resolution 71/5, on the necessity of ending the economic, commercial

and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba. My delegation condemns the United States embargo against Cuba as an active encroachment upon its sovereignty, a crime against humanity and an infringement of human rights, in violation of the Charter of the United Nations. The United States has been imposing a unilateral economic, commercial and financial embargo against the Republic of Cuba since its foundation.

The unilateral United States embargo, which has threatened the sovereignty of Cuba and its right to exist, is an act of hostile United States policy against Cuba. The damage done to the economy of Cuba due to the United States economic embargo is estimated to have reached astronomical figures. In spite of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries last year, the atrocious United States economic embargo continues to this day. There have been only a few modifications to its implementation measures, but the overall United States policy towards Cuba to bring about regime change through an economic embargo has never changed.

The adoption of resolution 71/5 at the current session, as a follow-up to resolutions adopted in previous sessions, is a reflection of the goodwill of the international community and shows the Government and the people of Cuba the General Assembly's support and solidarity.

The delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea takes this opportunity to extend its strong support for, and solidarity with, the Government and the people of Cuba as they struggle to safeguard their dignity and civility in their stand against the continuance of the unilateral embargo by the United States.

Mr. Rzheussky (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Cuban delegation on the outcome of the voting on resolution 71/5.

The Republic of Belarus welcomes the positive steps made since 2015 in terms of restoring diplomatic relations between the United States of America and Cuba, the holding of meetings between leaders of the two countries and the easing of certain restrictive measures against Cuba, including the decision announced today about abstaining in the voting on today's resolution. We also welcome the signing of an agreement on the normalization of relations between the European Union and Cuba.

The easing by the United States of America of certain sanctions against Cuba in the banking and tourism sectors, the restoration of direct postal and trade communications and the delisting of Cuba from the Department of State's list of State sponsors of terrorism are important steps in the right direction. However, those steps are clearly insufficient as long as a general trade embargo against Cuba remains in effect.

We have repeatedly stressed that the imposition of unilateral coercive measures as a means of exerting political and economic pressure on developing countries contravenes the core principles of international law enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and in the Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. Any attempts by certain States to alter the internal political systems of other States through military, political, economic or other means of coercion are inadmissible and counterproductive. That such measures are counterproductive was acknowledged today by the Permanent Representative of the United States, Ms. Samantha Power.

President Obama's recent decision to extend the trade sanctions against Cuba for another year is at odds with the recent steps and statements by officials in Washington. Not only does the decision hamper the development of the Cuban economy and encroach upon the rights and interests of both American and Cuban citizens, it also casts doubt upon the willingness of the United States to genuinely normalize relations with Cuba.

Belarus urges a prompt and full lifting of the economic, financial and trade embargo against Cuba by the United States of America. Only a full lifting of sanctions can demonstrate the intent of the United States to normalize bilateral relations with Cuba.

Ms. Mejía Vélez (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I congratulate the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, Mr. Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, and his entire delegation on the adoption of resolution 71/5. The voting on the resolution we witnessed a few minutes ago was a historic event, as those who previously opposed this annual resolution have taken into account the rapprochement and improvement of relations between the United States and Cuba and decided to abstain.

As stated by all of those who have spoken before me, the economic, commercial and financial embargo

imposed by the United States against Cuba is contrary to international law and the spirit and the letter of the principles set out in the Charter of the United Nations. Since the adoption of resolution 47/19 in November 1992, Colombia, like all countries in Latin America and the Caribbean and the immense majority of Member States, has expressed its unrestricted support for Cuba and voted in favour of subsequent iterations of that resolution, including the one we have just adopted today.

Today was no exception. Support was reflected in the 191 votes in favour, which matched that for the resolution adopted at last year's session (resolution 70/5), which emphasized the need to put an end to a policy of more than 50 years — as the President of Colombia, Mr. Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, has expressed on repeated occasions.

My country reaffirms its policy of respect for international law and for the principles of political independence, self-determination of peoples, non-intervention and non-interference in the internal affairs of other nations. Colombia believes it indispensable that Member States make progress in building relations of cooperation and friendship based on multilateralism and respect for the principle of sovereign equality enshrined in Chapter I of the United Nations Charter.

We note with optimism the renewal of diplomatic relations between Cuba and the United States of America, as well as steps taken to improve their relations, with the understanding, as we have heard here, that a great deal remains to be done. We trust that, in following this path, the embargo will finally be lifted.

Mr. García Moritán (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I wish to welcome the presence of Cuba's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, and to thank him for his very detailed statement.

Argentina fully aligns itself with the statements made by the representative of Thailand on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and by the representative of Dominican Republic on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, and wishes to make the following points in our national capacity.

The historic position of Argentina has been, and continues to be, that the economic, commercial and financial embargo bythe United States against Cuba is contrary to international law and must urgently be lifted. In the framework of our absolute commitment to the Charter of the United Nations and to multilateralism, Argentina is opposed to the use of unilateral coercive measures, the extraterritorial implementation of national laws and the adoption of discriminatory commercial practices. In that regard, Argentina is in accord with the demand of the international community to lift the blockade and the laws and regulations that support that policy.

Argentina has traditionally supported resolutions of the General Assembly against the blockade and has spoken against the blockade on every occasion when the subject has arisen, in both regional forums and other international organizations. Argentina expressed its satisfaction and optimism about the process initiated at the end of 2014 by the Governments of the United States and Cuba to normalize bilateral relations and congratulates both Governments on the decision to undertake the path of dialogue, which will allow them to resolve all pending questions — including the lifting of the blockade.

We welcome the progress achieved in the past nearly two years, which includes the reopening of embassies in both capitals and the visits of the President of the United States to Cuba and Cuban authorities to Washington, as well as the executive measures implemented by the United States Department of the Treasury and the Department of Commerce, which introduced amendments to regulations. Those steps in the right direction mark a new era of Cuban-American bilateral relations that seeks to leave behind a history of disagreement and assumes a mutual recognition by both Governments as legitimate and equal interlocutors.

Nevertheless, we regret that the laws underpinning the embargo are still in effect. Their implementation continues to impede the full development of the Cuban people.

We welcome the fact that there were no votes against the adoption of today's resolution. We hope that this will be the last time the General Assembly adopts a resolution on this issue. We furthermore hope that next year the provisions of the resolution will become abstractions, thereby consigning the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba to the past.

Mr. Rosselli (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I welcome the presence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, Mr. Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla.

Frankly, this is the type of statement that I would prefer not to have to make — in the first place because the embargo is still in place, but also because for more than 30 years I have been making statements of this type here, in the old General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, in the World Trade Organization, in the Union of South American Nations, in the Latin American Integration Association, in the Common Market of the South and in the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC). We would have preferred seeing that the situation had already changed.

As in previous years, Uruguay voted in favour of the resolution 71/5, introduced by the delegation of Cuba, because the blockade against Cuba runs counter to the rules of international law and the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, in particular non-intervention, peaceful settlement of disputes and the legal equality of States.

On principle, Uruguay rejects and does not recognize in its own national legislation the extraterritorial application of domestic laws of other States and direct or indirect measures that constitute unilateral action by any State that has as its objective sanctioning the sovereign decisions of another country in the political, economic, commercial, social and cultural spheres or any other area. In that connection, we condemn the application of unilateral coercive measures by the United States against Cuba.

We welcome the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between the Government of Cuba and the Government of the United States, which we acknowledge to be a positive step towards a new chapter in relations between the two countries. We welcome the removal of Cuba from the list of State sponsors of terrorism.

Nevertheless, we must put an end to the effects of the blockade that is still in place and affects the Cuban people with an economic and humanitarian burden. We certainly welcome the change of vote by the United States delegation to abstention, which means that the resolution was adopted today without opposition.

Our country believes that the sanctions and extraterritorial laws imposed against Cuba not only are a violation of international law, but also have inestimable consequences for the economic development of the Caribbean country. They are a way of depriving the Cuban people of the right to development, and they inflict a level of damage against their dignity and sovereignty that is impossible to quantify.

In voting in favour of resolution 71/5, Uruguay reiterates its commitment to multilateralism as a legitimate instrument for solving such disputes between States and an efficient way to promote international cooperation, human rights, security and understanding among people.

Uruguay aligns itself with the statements made by the representative of the Dominican Republic on behalf of CELAC and by the representative of Thailand on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Mr. Mra (Myanmar): I take the floor today to explain the vote of my delegation on resolution 71/5, entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba", which was just adopted by an overwhelming majority of Member States.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements made by the representative of Singapore on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, by the representative of Thailand on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and by the representative of Venezuela and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

Myanmar voted in favour of the resolution to demonstrate once again our firm opposition to any unilateral economic, commercial and financial embargoes imposed against any country. We fully understand the degree of loss and suffering caused by sanctions, because we have gone through similar experiences for decades. In the end, sanctions are counterproductive and affect only the innocent people of the country concerned.

As a member of the Non-Aligned Movement, Myanmar has steadfastly adhered to the principled position of the Movement in opposing the use of unilateral economic and trade sanctions. Sanctions are also contrary to the Charter of the United Nations, as well as to the international law principle of good-neighbourliness. Myanmar has always maintained that the relations among members of the international community should be based on mutual respect, and differences should be resolved through peaceful consultations.

Myanmar welcomes the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between Cuba and the United States represented by the reopening of their respective embassies in Havana and Washington, the historic visit by President Obama to Cuba in March and the easing of restrictions, including steps taken by the United States with regard to the Cuban draft resolution. These are important steps in enhancing bilateral relations and charting a new road map in order to build a brighter future for the present and future generations of both countries. Myanmar hopes that those important undertakings will lead to the earliest possible lifting of all the remaining restrictions imposed against Cuba.

Last September, world leaders gathered here at the United Nations to adopt the ambitious 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to move everyone, including our planet, towards a sustainable future. Member States also committed to working tirelessly for the full and effective implementation of the Goals and targets because they will open up new prospects and opportunities for global development and cooperation. One significant thing about this historic Agenda is that it calls for not leaving anyone behind. We are of the view that sanctions should be completely eliminated so that everyone will have the opportunity to achieve the Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda.

For the reasons I mentioned, Myanmar once again voted in favour of the resolution. I offer congratulations to the Cuban delegation for the impressive result.

Mr. Phansourivong (Lao People's Democratic Republic): The Lao People's Democratic Republic aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, by the representative of the Kingdom of Thailand on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and by the representative of the Republic of Singapore on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

Cooperation and engagement are key factors for peaceful coexistence and mutual benefit in the era of interdependence. In that respect, the Lao People's Democratic Republic welcomes the important progress made in the past year on the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between the Republic of Cuba and the United States of America, including the reopening of embassies in both respective capitals, as well as the historic visit to Cuba by President Barack Obama, which has opened a new chapter in the relations between the two countries, which have been stalled for decades. The Lao People's Democratic Republic also welcomes the decision of the United States to abstain in voting on resolution 71/5, which is another positive step.

With the current positive developments in relations between the Republic of Cuba and the United States of America, the Lao People's Democratic Republic strongly hopes that the progress made thus far will be further enhanced, leading to the lifting of the unilateral embargo against the Republic of Cuba in the near future. The Lao People's Democratic Republic believes that lifting the embargo will be beneficial not only to both countries, but to the international community. Furthermore, the lifting of the embargo will create an environment conducive to further enhancing dialogue and cooperation between the two countries and enable Cuba to engage in trade and economic exchange with nations around the world, including the United States of America, thereby contributing to improving the well-being of the Cuban people and the development of their country. I warmly congratulate the Cuban delegation.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote for this meeting. We shall hear the remaining speakers at 3 p.m. here in the Hall.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.